



CONGRESSMAN
Herbert H. Bateman

First District of Virginia

"America's First District"



2350 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515 ■ (202) 225-4261

NEWS

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CONTACT: Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE HERBERT H. BATEMAN
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY READINESS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA

March 16, 1998

I would like to welcome everyone here today to the second of a series of field hearings that the Subcommittee on Military Readiness will hold this year. It is a distinct and personal pleasure for me to hold this hearing at historic Fort Monroe, Virginia which is a visible symbol of the United States Army's military capabilities. Conducting a readiness hearing here on these hollowed grounds is significant in that military readiness begins here with the Training and Doctrine Command and can be seen, heard, and felt first hand here. It is also significant that many of the military services' operational bases are nearby.

I believe that it is important to get out in the field and hear from individuals at all levels who are charged with making readiness work. I also believe that it is important that all levels of military personnel have the opportunity to view the process by which Congress, and the House National Security Committee, exercises its oversight responsibilities which are mandated by the Constitution of the United States. We are here today, not so much as to ask questions, but rather, to listen to our witnesses give their own personal perspectives on training and education issues.

Today we will hear from the four military services about their training programs. Training, in my opinion, is one of the cornerstones of readiness. And, like readiness, once you find out it is broken, it is usually too late to fix it.

One of the concerns that I have in this area, is the cost of training. An analysis of the Department of Defense's end strengths, training workloads, and overall training budgets since 1987 shows that end strengths and training workloads have decreased at a much greater rate than training budgets. During this time, the Army has reduced from 18 to 10 divisions, the Navy has reduced by nearly half the number of ships it operates, and the Air Force has reduced from 24 to 19 fighter wing equivalents. Overall, military personnel downsizing has taken us from approximately 2.2 million active duty service members to the budget request level for fiscal year 1999 of 1.4 million active duty soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. Also during this same period, the training workloads for formal training and education programs decreased at about the same proportional amount. However, military personnel funding for students, instructors, management, and training support decreased only about one half of the proportional amount, and in fact, operations and maintenance funding, which is used to pay civilian and contractor instructors and to operate, maintain and support training facilities and equipment, has increased by about 30 percent. As everyone here today is well aware, O&M funding is being stretched to the limits. We must get the most effective use out of each and every O&M dollar.

I am also concerned with the quality of the training that our military members are receiving. Some of the questions that I would like addressed today include: are the military forces receiving the required training to develop the necessary combat skills to not only fight, but win in any potential armed conflict?; are the training centers adequately funded and do they have all the necessary equipment to perform their training?; is the equipment that the training centers train with the same or similar to the equipment the trainees will be assigned to on completion of training?; and, are the services accomplishing the levels of training needed to sustain individual combat capabilities?

I would also like to hear about some of the new technologies that the military services are using to improve training and to fill in when there are insufficient funds to accomplish training in the field, such as distance learning and simulation. Some of these new technologies may improve the methods by which we train, but we must balance these new methods with the actual hands-on training that has served us well in the past.

I believe this hearing today will be one of the more important hearings the subcommittee will have this year. It is important that members of the Subcommittee hear what is really going on from a cross section of our military service members who are "in the know" on these issues. Our aim today is to hear from those that have to deal with the day-to-day training and education challenges of their respective services.

We are very fortunate to have two panels of individuals representing the four military services. The first panel is composed of top level training commanders to give us their views from the big picture point of view. The second panel will have commanders of individual training centers to give us their perspective on the actual accomplishment of training.